



Department  
for Education

# Flexible Apprenticeships in Health and Social Care





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# What are flexible apprenticeships?

## Introduction

- Apprenticeships have undergone major employer-led reforms to transform into a prestigious and high-quality training offer.
- Employers of all sizes now have greater involvement in their apprenticeship choices.
- While we have made significant progress, we need to make sure apprenticeships reflect modern models of employment and work for all employers in all sectors. We are introducing changes to make apprenticeships more flexible and portable than before.

- **2012:** [Richard Review](#) and introduction of employer-led standards through Trailblazer groups.
- **2017:** introduction of the [Apprenticeship Levy](#); and launch of [IfATE](#) and the Digital [Apprenticeship Service](#).
- **2018:** [Transfers](#) introduced – employers who pay the levy able to transfer levy funds in bulk to other employers, including SMEs.
- **2019:** Applicants invited to test Digital Apprenticeship Service for SMEs.
- **2020:** All apprenticeship starts through employer-led standards.
- **2021:** All apprenticeship starts arranged through the Digital Apprenticeship Service.
- ↓ **Beyond 2021:** Building on employer-led apprenticeships to deliver the ambitions of the [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#).

## What is this manual for?

- This manual explains how off-the-job training can be flexed to meet individual employer needs. It includes information and case studies about:

**Flexible training models** – options for delivering off-the-job training, including ‘front-loading’ blocks of training at the beginning of an apprenticeship.

**Accelerated apprenticeships** – approaches to adjusting the content and duration of apprenticeship training plans through recognition of prior learning.

- Some employers are already making use of these flexibilities and are seeing the benefits in workforce satisfaction and productivity.
- We want all employers to think creatively about how they can tailor the delivery of off-the-job training to suit their needs; working with providers and apprentices to achieve the right blend of on- and off-the-job training with high-quality outcomes.

**Apprentice:** commits to training programme and end point assessment.

**Provider(s):** responsible for training and end point assessment.



**Employer:** supports apprentice through training to end point assessment.



# Flexible training models

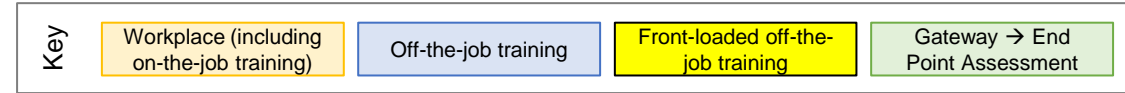
## What are flexible training models?

- Both employers and providers have a role in delivering training:
  - Off-the-job training** is delivered by the training provider to give the apprentice the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to achieve occupational competence.
  - On-the-job training** is delivered by the employer to help the apprentice perform the job they have been hired to do.
- Apprenticeships must involve at least **20% off-the-job training**. It is up to the employer and provider to decide how the training is delivered. This could be at the apprentice's usual place of work, or at an external location (e.g. a college or specialist training site).
- Employers use **different training models** to meet their needs, including regular day release, block release, and special training days/workshops. Figure 1 illustrates some common approaches to off-the-job training.

## For more information

- See Government guidance about [off-the-job training](#).
- Consult the [ESFA funding rules](#).
- [Find a provider](#) and talk to them about your options.
- Visit the [HASO](#) website for examples of how employers are flexing off-the-job training to meet their needs.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO SEE CASE STUDIES



### Day release



*Time in the workplace frequently interspersed with training (e.g. a proportion each day, or a one day weekly/fortnightly)*

### Key features

- Local to workplace
- Frequent contact with provider
- Fits around day-to-day job role

### Block release

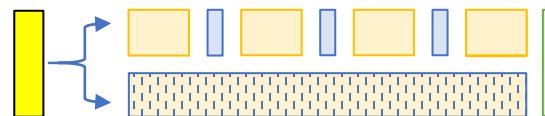


*Longer periods in the workplace interspersed with concentrated periods of training of training of ≥1 week.*

### Key features

- Intensive training
- Extended time in workplace
- Potential residential element

### Front-loading



*A block of training delivered at the beginning of the apprenticeship to embed core knowledge, skills and behaviours.*

### Key features

- Intensive training up-front means core elements are embedded early
- Potential residential element
- Potential to reduce duration

Figure 1 – diagrams to show common delivery models for apprenticeship training and their defining features.



# Accelerated apprenticeships

## What are accelerated apprenticeships?

- At the start of an apprenticeship, providers must complete an **initial assessment** to ensure the individual is eligible for an apprenticeship, and to identify their starting point or 'baseline'. This is done by assessing the knowledge, skills, or behaviours that the apprentice already has and therefore does not need to repeat in their apprenticeship training: their **prior learning**.
- Prior learning is **not limited to formal qualifications** and can include skills built through work or life experience – as well as more formal training or qualifications. By removing prior learning from the training plan, the time it takes to complete the apprenticeship can become shorter.
- An **accelerated apprenticeship** is where the apprentice's planned duration is shorter ( $\geq 3$  months) than the typical duration of the standard, based on prior learning. Minimum requirements of an apprenticeship must still be met, including the 12-month minimum duration and 20% off-the-job training.

## For more information

- See Government guidance on [initial assessment](#), and [end-point assessment](#).
- Consult the [ESFA funding rules](#) and the Government's [apprenticeship agreement template](#).
- Visit the [NHS Health Careers website](#) for information about accelerated programmes available in certain clinical professions.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO SEE CASE STUDIES

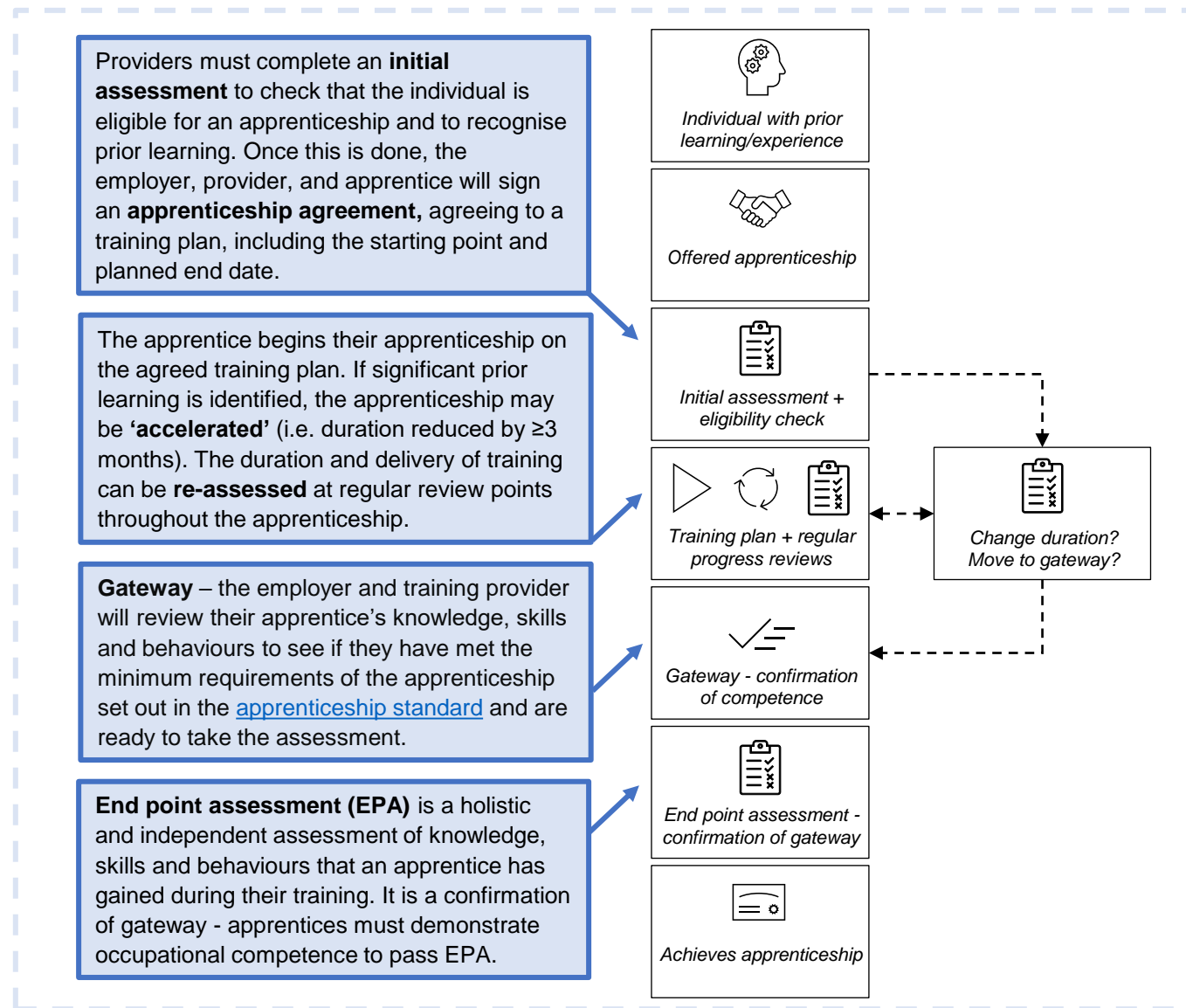


Figure 2 – model to show how training plans are adapted according to recognised prior learning.



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Case studies:  
flexible training models



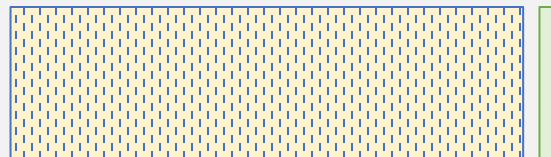
# Case study: day release model

**Organisation(s):** University of Warwick

**Apprenticeship(s):** [Social Worker \(integrated degree\)](#)

*(level 6, typical duration to gateway: 36 months, incl. EPA period)*

- The programme follows a day release delivery model with off-the-job learning taking place on a set day each week over the course of a calendar year.
- Training plan includes blended learning (face-to-face teaching and online learning / self-study days), reflective learning through small group seminar sessions, as well as lectures and tutorials.



Off-the-job training takes place on a set day each week over a year.

Training plan includes a mix of blended and reflective learning, as well as seminars, lectures, tutorials.

## Benefits

- ✓ Model enables apprentices to manage academic study and caseload commitments effectively.
- ✓ Off-the-job training days are agreed and timetabled at the start of the programme to avoid poor attendance.
- ✓ Structure enables rapid application of taught concepts into practice to reinforce and embed theoretical learning during 4 days between teaching sessions.
- ✓ Accommodates learners not able to spend blocks of time away from work and/or for personal reasons (caring responsibilities / children).
- ✓ Provides a reflective learning model – apprentices learn from peers working in very different practice settings.

## Things to consider

- Provision is less constrained by geography due to the programme's blended learning model. This model brings together on- and off-site cohorts on alternate weeks through online learning.
- Accommodates employer constraints / challenges in releasing apprentices for blocks of time due to caseload commitments.
- Progress monitored quarterly during Tripartite Review meetings – both on- and off-the-job – to ensure apprentices are meeting the required Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours.
- Timetable managed to provide time off over the summer to accommodate school holidays.

Key

Workplace (including on-the-job training)

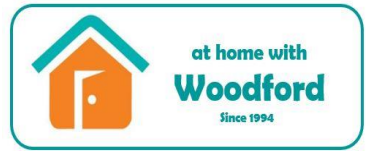
Off-the-job training

Front-loaded off-the-job training

Gateway → End Point Assessment



# Case study: front-loaded training model

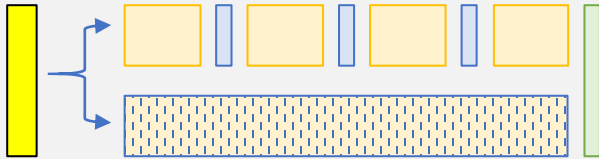


**Organisation(s):** Woodford Home Care

**Apprenticeship(s):** [Lead Adult Care Worker](#)

*(level 3, typical duration to gateway: 18 months, excl. EPA period)*

- Intense period of training at the beginning of the apprenticeship to set foundation for future continued professional development (CPD).
- This training covers key behaviours and embeds good practice at the beginning of the apprenticeship.



*Introduces CPD log and sets foundation for future learning and development.*

*Apprentice continues on training plan drawing on CPD log as framework for their learning.*

## Benefits

- ✓ More intense training period fosters cohort companionship, and shared value base.
- ✓ Brings together apprentices from multiple employers.
- ✓ Core knowledge, skills, and behaviours embedded up front before being put into practice in the workplace.

## Things to consider

- Employers will need to accommodate for more frequent/longer periods of off-the-job training at the beginning of the apprenticeship in their workforce planning.

**Key**

	Workplace (including on-the-job training)		Off-the-job training		Front-loaded off-the-job training		Gateway → End Point Assessment
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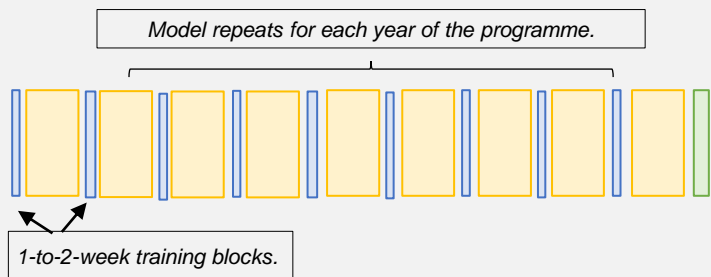
# Case study: block training model

**Organisation(s):** Sheffield Hallam University

**Apprenticeship(s):** [Occupational Therapist](#)

*(level 6, typical duration to gateway: 48 months, excl. EPA)*

- Apprentices undertake teaching activities throughout the programme delivered in blocks of teaching of between 1-2 weeks per block.
- Most teaching is delivered online with on-campus delivery required at the beginning of each year of the course where important key activities relating to induction and introduction to each level of the course are undertaken in groups via face-to-face delivery.
- Teaching and placement block details are shared with employers and apprentices in advance to give notice so that planning in clinical services can be managed.



## Benefits

- ✓ This model can be tailored by region to meet employer needs.
- ✓ Start dates, course timetables, and teaching delivery can be adapted.
- ✓ Student experience remains a priority – tailored training models must be agreed to ensure high levels of student support are maintained.

## Things to consider

- Employers can access tailored training models for closed cohorts.
- The employer must allocate a workplace mentor for each apprentice to support them throughout their training to qualification.
- Entry requirements to the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Degree Apprenticeship and BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy Degree Apprenticeship undergraduate accredited programmes are applicable to all applicants and are designed to ensure robust preparation for the academic and practice elements of the course, whilst promoting wide and inclusive entry.

Key

Workplace (including on-the-job training)

Off-the-job training

Front-loaded off-the-job training

Gateway → End Point Assessment



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Case studies:  
accelerated apprenticeships



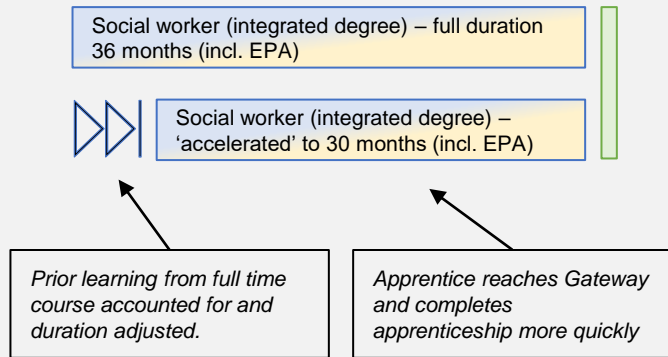
# Case study: accelerated apprenticeship

**Organisation(s):** University of Warwick

**Apprenticeship(s):** Social Work degree (full time) → [Social Worker \(integrated degree\)](#)

*(level 6, typical duration to gateway: 36 months, incl. EPA period)*

- Applicant completed 1 year of traditional, full time Social Work degree.
- Due to time and financial constraints the student left full time education, applied for and was offered an apprentice social work role with a local authority
- In consultation with the University, prior learning was accounted for, which enabled the apprentice to reduce the duration of their apprenticeship from 36 to 30 months (including EPA period).



## Benefits

- ✓ Prior learning can still be recognised, even if gained whilst studying for a full-time degree which wasn't completed.
- ✓ This models offers flexible pathways into degree apprenticeships.
- ✓ Recognition of prior learning helps individuals to continue studying when their circumstances change.
- ✓ Offers a cost-effective option for employers to meet workforce development needs.

## Things to consider

- Reduction in training time in line with Education & Skills Agency Funding Rules to avoid duplication of learning, but calculated to meet practice-learning requirements.
- Offers options for employers to both upskill current workforce and attract new employees into the organisation.

Key

Workplace (including on-the-job training)

Off-the-job training

Front-loaded off-the-job training

Gateway → End Point Assessment

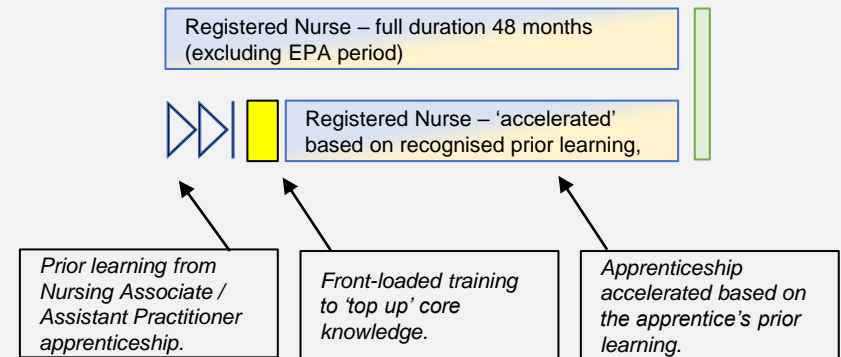


# Case study: accelerated apprenticeship

**Organisation(s):** University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

**Apprenticeship(s):** [Nursing Associate](#) (level 5, typical duration to gateway: 24 months, excl. EPA period) / [Assistant Practitioner](#) (level 5, typical duration to gateway: 18 months, excl. EPA period) → [Registered Nurse](#) (level 6, typical duration to gateway: 48 months, excl. EPA period).

- Provider and employer work together to front-load academic training, allowing apprentices to 'top up' core knowledge before putting this into practice.
- Students who are 'topping up' have access to a pathway to ensure they are accessing programmes at the right point with the correct requirements to meet NMC (Nursing and Midwifery Council) standards.



## Benefits

- ✓ Strong collaboration between employers and Higher Education Institutes to meet employer needs.
- ✓ Staff able to progress from level 5 to 6 and enter the workforce as a registered nurse in a timely way.

## Things to consider

- Before committing to this programme, employers should consider the skills needs of their organisation and of their staff. They should also plan accordingly for resource implications associated with increased study time.
- Front-loaded 'top up' content should be mapped to accelerated programmes so that no learning is repeated.
- Employers must plan paid release time for staff to achieve front-loaded 'top up' training.

Key

Workplace (including on-the-job training)

Off-the-job training

Front-loaded off-the-job training

Gateway → End Point Assessment



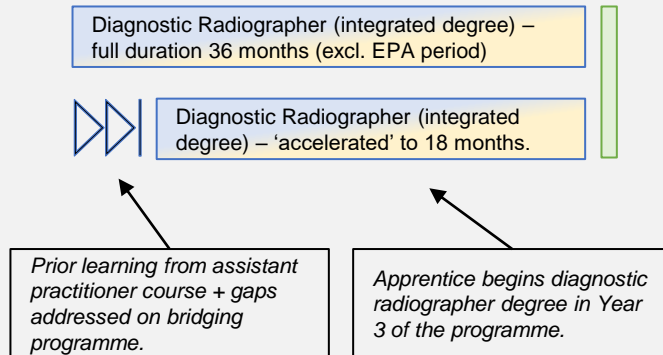
# Case study: accelerated apprenticeship



**Organisation(s):** University of Derby

**Apprenticeship(s):** Assistant Practitioner Foundation Degree (level 4) → [Diagnostic Radiographer](#) (level 6, typical duration to gateway: 36 months, excl. EPA period)

- In the East Midlands region, a number of NHS Trusts had Assistant Practitioners who had undertaken level 4 Foundation Degrees but were unable to progress to complete a BSc Hons in Diagnostic Radiography due to the financial implications of having to leave employment for two years.
- Since 2018, the University of Derby has run a [Bridging Programme](#) to reduce the time required to complete the Diagnostic Radiographer apprenticeship from 36 (full duration) to 18 months.



## Benefits

- ✓ Accelerated apprenticeships can be used to support upskilling, and progression into other occupations.
- ✓ Apprenticeships can be a positive tool for staff to continue to train, where full time education may not be possible, or where they wish to remain employed.
- ✓ Learners are supported to address skills and knowledge gaps in areas such as theatre and mobile radiography, paediatric radiography, and cross-sectional imaging, plus academic skills such as research skills and critical appraisal skills.

## Things to consider

- Where apprentices are existing employees, the employer can play a key role in supporting the provider to understand the starting point of the apprentice – they will have key insight into the level of skills and knowledge the apprentice already has, and how best they can be supported to learn.
- Apprentices can often feel supported by peers and building relationships with other apprentices on the same programme. Here, several NHS Trusts had individuals who were keen to progress to Diagnostic Radiographer – by working with the same provider, the wider cohort could provide peer support to each other and find a common solution.
- Bridging courses can contribute towards prior learning, enabling acceleration and complementing on-the-job training.

Key

Workplace (including on-the-job training)

Off-the-job training

Front-loaded off-the-job training

Gateway → End Point Assessment